



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

1420 East Sixth Avenue
P.O. Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
November 29, 1996

Governor's Office, Attn: Glenn Marx
Environmental Quality Council
Dept. of Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, POB 200901,
Helena, MT 59620-0901
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Fisheries Division
Endangered Species Coordinator
Great Falls Offices
Montana Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, POB
201202, Helena, MT 59620-1202
Montana State Library, 1515 East Sixth Avenue, POB 201800, Helena,
MT 59620-1800
MT Environmental Information Center, POB 1184, Helena, MT 59624
MT Audubon Council, POB 595, Helena, MT 59624
Teton Conservation District
Environmental Protection Agency, Federal Building, Helena, MT 59601
Army Corps of Engineers, 301 South Park Avenue, Helena, MT 59601
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 100 North Park Avenue, Helena, Mt
59601

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

Enclosed is a copy of the decision notice by FWP to allow the Future Fisheries Improvement project on the Teton River to proceed as planned. If you have any questions regarding the fisheries project or the decision, you may contact me at the Helena office by calling 444-2432.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Bruce J. Rehwinkel
Habitat Protection
Fisheries Division

DECISION NOTICE
TETON RIVER FUTURE FISHERIES IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
Prepared by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
November 29, 1996

PROPOSAL

The Teton River above Choteau has numerous irrigation diversions. Most of these diversions involve maintenance which usually includes rebuilding of gravel dikes, realigning channels, or excavating gravel deposits that impede streamflows adjacent to irrigation canal headgates. Additionally, several of these diversions involve exclusively high-water diversion. These high-water diversions generally create massive deposition of bedload gravels because the stream is losing the energy of its total force at that time.

Bynum Diversion is exactly this situation. Huge amounts of gravel have been deposited over time adjacent to the diversion. Periodic large-scale excavations have been used to resolve the diversion problems - on the short-term. What has resulted is a very unstable channel that is extremely close to capturing another tributary - McDonald Creek. If the channel migration continues unchecked, the flow of the entire Teton River will pass into a smaller stream. This will result in major erosion of that channel, as it attempts to accommodate the new higher flow regime. Additionally, other irrigation diversions along the present Teton River course (below the Bynum Diversion) will be left without water.

The Teton River streambanks will be stabilized using trees, root wads, and rock to protect approximately 660 feet of channel from migrating any closer to the McDonald Creek channel. The revetment of this channel with natural materials will follow the general principles described by Dave Rosgen. The intent of this approach is to create a defined channel that will continue to provide for the passing of these large bedloads of gravel and maintain a functioning channel that does not migrate laterally.

MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA) PROCESS

The proposal has been outlined in an Environmental Assessment (EA) by FWP to satisfy the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). FWP is required to assess the impacts to the human and natural environment. The EA was available for public comment from August 19 to September 23, 1996.

ISSUES RAISED IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The checklist EA listed the issues. No major impacts are known to occur if the project proceeds as planned. Some of the minor impacts listed in the EA included: a temporary increase in turbidity, an increased diversity of fish habitat for a variety of sportfish species, a more stable single channel river and an improved riparian vegetative community.

GENERAL SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public or agency comments were received.

DECISION

Utilizing the EA and the public comment, a decision must be rendered by FWP which addresses the concerns and issues identified for this fisheries restoration project.

Based on the findings of the EA that established no known significant impacts, an EIS is not required and it is my decision to approve the fisheries restoration project.

Sincerely,



Bruce J. Rehwinkel
Fisheries Division
Helena, MT 59620